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UNCLAS VIENNA 001726

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR PM/DTCC (STITZIEL)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ETTC KOMC AU

SUBJECT: BLUE LANTERN: PRE-LICENSE END-USE CHECK ON

APPLICATION 05-960664

REF: STATE 073936

¶1. (U) EconPolCouns and Poloffs met on May 20 with Spedition Welz representatives Andreas Praehauser, deputy manager for customs procedures, and Rainer Wirthenstaetter, director of logistics, at the firm's customs office on Franz-Sauer-Strasse 48 in Salzburg. Praehauser and Wirthenstaetter provided the following information in response to ref questions.

¶2. (U) Background on Spedition Welz

-- How long has the company been in business?

Spedition Welz, officially known as Welz Internationale Spedition GmbH, was founded in 1924. It is headquartered in Salzburg, has over 450 employees worldwide according to the company website, and is one of the largest Austrian freight forwarding agents. The company offers a full range of international logistical services for all types of goods, including chemicals and other hazardous materials. These services include arranging warehousing, intermodal (air, sea, rail, truck) transport, and customs clearance, a specialty area for Welz.

Spedition Welz, according to Wirthenstaetter, became part of the Austrian Quehenberger Logistics Group in January 2000, which, itself, is part of the Luxembourg-based firm Thiel Logistics and Services. In 2004, the German firm Quant acquired nearly half of Thiel. Through this conglomerate, Spedition Welz has an estimated 172,000 square meters of covered warehouse space in over thirty Austrian locations, according to its website, with some 32 branch offices worldwide.

-- Who are the company's typical customers and where are they located?

Spedition Welz has a global customer base. It is particularly active, however, in Eastern and Southeastern Europe (including Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine) where it has nearly fifty branch offices.

-- Does the company have an established, legitimate customer base?

The company has a large, reputable customer base. For example, according to Wirthenstaetter, the Austrian energy drink producer Red Bull is Spedition Welz' biggest customer.

-- What kind of records does the company keep?

According to Praehauser, Spedition Welz keeps written copies of contacts with its clients. Welz also offers access, via a password, to their online system, where customers can track shipments and request logistical services.

-- What is Post's assessment of Welz' on-site security?

According to Praehauser, Spedition Welz stores the munitions it handles in a special customs facility with 24-hour security coverage. Emboffs did not tour this facility, which is not co-located with the office where we met with Praehauser and Wirthenstaetter.

¶3. (SBU) In Post's view, Spedition Welz is a reliable custodian of United States Munitions List items. We saw no indication of a connection to the activities mentioned in intelligence reporting.

¶4. (U) Contact Information

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